

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



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#### **2013 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release #52**

#### **Summer Update #5, Districts 1-6**

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

#### **Assessment Projects**

##### Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF)/ADF&G, YDFDA

8.5-Inch Set Gillnet: The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE through July 7 is 6.75, which is below the historical average of 20.83 for late run years at the same date. CPUE may have been underestimated due to the influence of high water and debris, particularly early in the season.

8.25-Inch Drift Gillnet: The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE through July 7 is 196.07, which is well below the average of 430.99 for this date.

##### Summer Chum Drift Test Fishery/ADF&G, YDFDA

5.5-Inch Drift Gillnet: The cumulative summer chum salmon CPUE through July 7 is 3,996.24, which is above the historical median of 3,539.56 for this date.

##### Andreafsky River Weir/USFWS

The cumulative counts through July 7 are 213 Chinook salmon and approximately 27,000 summer chum salmon.

##### Yukon River Sonar Project located near Pilot Station/ADF&G

Chinook salmon passage at Yukon River sonar is estimated at approximately 110,000 salmon as of July 7, which is below the historical average of 116,000 salmon for late run years at the same date. Summer chum salmon passage is estimated at 2.4 million salmon, which is well above the historical median of 1.6 million salmon for this date.

#### Anvik River Sonar Project/ADF&G

The summer chum salmon passage is estimated to be approximately 277,000 through July 7, which is above the historical median of 209,000 for this date.

#### Gisasa River Weir/USFWS

The cumulative counts through July 7 are 69 Chinook salmon which is below the historical average of 312 for this date. The cumulative count of summer chum salmon through July 7 is 22,000 which is above the historical median of 12,000 for this date.

#### Henshaw Creek Weir/TCC

As of July 7, no Chinook salmon or summer chum salmon have been recorded.

#### Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/Zuray

The cumulative expanded counts through July 7 are 498 Chinook salmon which is below the historical average of 596 for this date. Approximately 20 summer chum salmon have been recorded which is below the historical median of 57 for this date.

#### Chena River Tower/ADF&G

This project is expected to be fully operational and begin counting this week.

#### Salcha River Tower/BSFA

This project is expected to be fully operational and begin counting this week.

#### Eagle Sonar/ADF&G

This project is expected to be fully operational and begin counting this week.

*NOTE: Other assessment projects will be added as they become operational.*

#### Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.5-inch LYTF set nets through July 6 was 2% age-4, 22% age-5, 74% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. Age-5 fish were below average for this date and age-6 fish were above average. Females were above average at 61%. The sample size was 511 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.25-inch Big Eddy drift nets through July 5 was 2% age-4, 27% age-5, 68% age-6, and 3% age-7 fish. Females were 59%. The sample size was 122 fish.

The chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch LYTF drift nets through July 6 was 42% age-4, 57% age-5, and 1% age-6 fish. Age-4 fish were slightly below average for this date and age-5 fish were slightly above average. Females were 49%. The sample size was 1,000 fish.

The chum salmon age composition from the beach seine and dipnet commercial fishery through July 1 was 38% age-4, 59% age-5, and 2% age-6 fish. Females were 47%. The sample size was 960 fish collected from six periods.

The chum salmon age composition from the  $\leq 5.5''$  mesh gillnet commercial fishery after July 1 was 52% age-4, 46% age-5, and 2% age-6 fish. Females were 48%. The sample size was 320 fish collected from two periods.

## **Assessment**

The Chinook salmon run timing continues to track later than average years. The sonar located near Pilot Station had a cumulative passage estimate of approximately 110,000 Chinook salmon through July 7 is below the historical average of 134,000 for this date, and is also below the average passage estimate of 116,000 at this point for late run years. A strong first pulse of Chinook salmon passed the sonar June 21 through June 23. However, the second group of Chinook salmon to pass the sonar June 23 through July 1 was weaker than expected based on test fishing indices in the lower river. The historical average median of the Chinook salmon run at Pilot Station sonar for late years is June 27. Current data suggest the 2013 median of the run at Pilot Station was approximately June 26 through June 27. Since July 2, a third and larger group of Chinook salmon have passed by the sonar. The first pulse of Chinook salmon is currently appearing at the Rapids Test Fish Wheel. Based on the best data currently available and historical timing associated with an average late run, the 2013 Chinook salmon run size is coming in slightly higher than the low end of the preseason outlook of 98,000 and may be better than the poor run of 2012.

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the first pulse of Chinook salmon past the sonar located near Pilot Station (June 16-23) estimated that 72% were Canadian-origin Chinook salmon, while the second pulse of Chinook salmon at the sonar (June 24 – July 2) were comprised of 50% Canadian-origin Chinook salmon. These genetic analyses suggest a better Canadian run size than 2012. For more background information and latest updates on genetic MSA for Yukon River Chinook salmon, please refer to the department's Gene Conservation Laboratory webpage: ([http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishinggeneconservationlab.yukonchinook\\_baseline](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishinggeneconservationlab.yukonchinook_baseline)).

Summer chum salmon passage through July 7 at the sonar located near Pilot Station is estimated to be approximately 2.4 million fish, which is well above the historical median of 1.6 million for this date. The historical third quartile of the summer chum salmon run at the sonar is July 4. Based on historical run timing, the summer chum salmon run is on track to exceed the preseason outlook estimate and may be in the range of 2.5 to 3.0 million fish.

## **Management Strategies**

The 2013 Chinook and summer chum salmon runs are tapering off in the lower river. The current projection for the total Chinook salmon run size is slightly above the preseason outlook. However, based on the assessment information to date, the poor run sizes observed in recent years, and the difficulties in meeting escapement goals, it is warranted to continue to conservatively manage the Chinook salmon run.

The management actions taken in Districts 1-4 to conserve Chinook salmon are now being similarly implemented in Districts 5-6. Subdistricts 5-A, B, and C have had two consecutive subsistence fishing periods closed. The first pulse closure has been scheduled to occur July 10 in

Subdistrict Lower 5-D. Closures in these Subdistricts will likely be followed by reduced subsistence fishing periods. However, during these reduced subsistence periods between pulse closures, gillnets will continue to be restricted to no larger than 6 inches and fish wheels will be restricted to require the live release of all Chinook salmon in order to target summer chum salmon and other fish species.

Additionally, in District 6, a subsistence fishing period will be cancelled and personal use salmon fishing will be closed to protect Chinook salmon as they migrate through the Tanana River. In recent years, the Chena River escapement goal has not been met even when extensive management actions were taken in the mainstem. The challenge in recent years to get adequate Chinook salmon to the Chena River spawning grounds warrants additional conservative management in District 6.

In the lower river districts, a reduced subsistence salmon fishing schedule is being established with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size for the remainder of the summer season. Commercial fishing opportunity in District 1 and District 2 to target summer chum salmon using gillnets will be provided. The incidental harvest of Chinook salmon during these commercial fishing periods is expected to be low.

## **Current Management**

### **Subsistence Fishing:**

For the current subsistence schedule please call **(toll free): 1-866-479-7387 or in Fairbanks call (907) 459-7387**. The current subsistence fishing schedules are as follows:

#### **Coastal District:**

Subsistence salmon fishing in the entire Coastal District is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

**District 1:** Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Effective 8:00 p.m. Monday, July 8, subsistence salmon fishing will be open for two 18-hour periods per week from 8:00 p.m. Mondays until 2:00 p.m. Tuesdays and from 8:00 p.m. Thursdays until 2:00 p.m. Fridays, with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

**District 2:** Subsistence salmon fishing in District 2 is currently closed.

The department will notify fishermen by July 9 concerning the subsistence salmon fishing schedule in District 2.

**District 3:** Subsistence salmon fishing is open for one 18-hour period from 2:00 p.m. Monday, July 8, until 8:00 a.m., Tuesday, July 9, with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon.

**Subdistrict 4-A Lower** (from  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Stink Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik and Grayling):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A Lower is currently closed and will remain closed during the next subsistence salmon fishing period which was scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. Sunday, July 7, to conserve Chinook salmon.

**Subdistrict 4-A Upper** (from Stink Creek upstream to Cone Point, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A Upper is currently closed and will remain closed during the next subsistence salmon fishing period which was scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. Sunday, July 7, to conserve Chinook salmon.

**Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C** (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C is currently closed.

**Subdistricts 5-A,B,C:** Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C is currently closed and will remain closed during the next subsistence salmon fishing period which was scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 9, to conserve Chinook salmon.

**Subdistricts 5-D:** Because of the large size of Subdistrict 5-D and the long time it takes salmon to migrate all the way through this section of river, this management area will be further subdivided. This strategy is intended to allow for more management precision and flexibility when the reduced subsistence fishing schedule is implemented to conserve Chinook salmon. Subdistrict 5-D, will be divided into the following three areas

**Subdistricts 5-D Lower** (from an ADF&G regulatory marker 2 miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the Hadweenzic River and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Stevens Village and Beaver):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size. Effective 8:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 10, subsistence salmon fishing will close to protect the first pulse of Chinook salmon and remain closed until further notice.

**Subdistrict 5-D Middle** (from the Hadweenzic River upstream to 22 Mile Slough and including the Porcupine River and all other adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Venetie, Fort Yukon, and Chalkyitsik):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

**Subdistrict 5-D Upper** (from 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Circle and Eagle):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

**Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B** (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the downstream mouth of Wood River, which includes the communities of Manley, Minto, and Nenana):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B consists of two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays, and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Effective 12:00 noon Wednesday, July 10, subsistence fishing will close and remain closed during the next subsistence salmon fishing period which was scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 12, to conserve Chinook salmon. The subsistence fishing schedule in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B will resume beginning 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 15.

**Subdistricts 6-C** (from the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the downstream mouth of the Salcha River, which includes the communities of Fairbanks, North Pole, and Salcha):

Personal use salmon fishing in Subdistrict 6-C consists of two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays, and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Effective 12:00 noon Wednesday, July 10, personal use salmon fishing in Subdistrict 6-C will close and remain closed until further notice to conserve Chinook salmon.

#### **Old Minto Area:**

Subsistence salmon fishing in Old Minto area is on a schedule of 5 days a week, from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays, and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 10, subsistence fishing will close and remain closed until 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 15, in the Old Minto Area. Subsistence salmon fishing in the Old Minto Area will reopen for the remainder of the scheduled period from 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 15, until 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 17.

**Innoko River:** Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

**Koyukuk River:** Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches and a length greater than 60 feet must be removed from the water.

## **Commercial Fishing:**

The preliminary commercial harvest in Districts 1 and 2 combined through July 7 is approximately 262,000 summer chum salmon with a reported 957 Chinook salmon released and 102 Chinook salmon caught but not sold.

**District 1 Commercial Gillnet Salmon Fishing:** Commercial salmon fishing in the entire District 1 area will be open for one 6-hour period from 8:00 p.m. Monday, July 8, until 2:00 a.m. Tuesday, July 9, with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon.

**District 2 Commercial Gillnet Salmon Fishing:** Commercial salmon fishing in District 2 will be open for one 4-hour period from 8:00 p.m. Monday, July 8, until 12:00 midnight Monday, July 8, with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon.

**Subdistrict 4-A Commercial Fishwheel:** Fish wheels must be manned at all times during operations and all Chinook salmon caught in the fish wheels must immediately be released to the water alive. Commercial fishing will be open for six 24-hour fishing periods:

Period #8: Monday, July 8

Period #9: Tuesday, July 9

Period #10: Wednesday, July 10

Period #11: Thursday, July 11

Period #12: Friday, July 12

Period #13: Saturday, July 13

The preliminary commercial harvest in Subdistrict 4-A through July 5 is approximately 9,600 summer chum salmon with a reported 13 Chinook salmon released alive.

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements will be available 24 hours a day at 1-866-479-7387 (toll free outside of Fairbanks); in Fairbanks, call (907) 459-7387. If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADFG office in Emmonak at 949-1320 or in Fairbanks at 459-7274. The Emmonak ADF&G office will stand by on VHF channel 7A.